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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/07/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [JO](#) [IS](#) [IR](#)
SUBJECT: A/S WELCH MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER KHATIB

Classified By: Ambassador David Hale for Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (C) Summary: NEA A/S David Welch, Qmpanied by Ambassador, Staff Assistant Ann Donick and poloff (notetaker), met June 5 with Foreign Minister Abdelelah al-Khatib in Amman. In addition to bilateral issues, they discussed recent developments in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Iranian nuclear issue. End Summary.

Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

12. (C) Khatib told A/S Welch that he was unsure about the prospects of the Palestinian National Dialogue, but knew that Palestinian Authority (PA) President Abu Mazen was prepared to issue a presidential decree to call for a referendum on the prisoners' document if talks between Fatah and Hamas failed to reach an agreement. Abu Mazen had asked the GOJ to help formulate a "legal argument" in support of the proposed plebiscite, as the Palestinian Basic Law did not provide for such a referendum. Khatib continued that the wording of the referendum would be very important, and said that "more general language" would be preferable. A/S Welch replied that general language might be appropriate, but added that the text of the referendum should not be vulnerable to misinterpretation. Khatib concurred that the text should make clear that the Palestinian public supports the platform for peace.

13. (C) Khatib hoped that if the referendum is held and approved, Hamas would be forced to accept the terms laid out in Abu Mazen's letter of assignment for the current government. If Hamas refuses to abide by a positive referendum outcome, Abu Mazen will have a strong reason to call for fresh elections. This is why, Khatib went on, Hamas leaders) including Prime Minister Haniya) strongly opposed the referendum and were claiming it was not legal. Agreeing that the U.S. should keep at arm's length from the referendum so it does not appear to be a U.S. initiative, Khatib advised the U.S. to encourage and strengthen Abu Mazen, and to work to avoid armed confrontation between Palestinian factions as this would only serve to derail peace efforts.

14. (C) Asked by A/S Welch if Israeli Prime Minister Olmert would be coming soon to Jordan, Khatib replied that the GOJ was "working on" arranging such a visit to follow up on Olmert's recent meeting with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. Khatib hoped to have a date for the visit, to include a meeting with King Abdullah, soon. (Comment: The GOI and GOJ are working towards a Thursday meeting. End Comment.)

Iran

¶5. (C) A/S Welch briefed Khatib on the recent agreement by the P-5 plus Germany on a package of measures designed to address the Iranian nuclear issue. He emphasized that the U.S. wanted to keep the details quiet for now to prevent a "reflexive" Iranian reaction. While the U.S. offer to engage in talks had proved key in getting the Russians and Chinese on board, a positive Iranian response would not lead to normalized relations with the U.S. or remove the many other irritants in the U.S.-Iran relationship. Khatib said that the Iranians "are not irrational enough" to flatly reject the package. He predicted that Iran would recognize the potential benefits from the offer and accordingly engage in dialogue with the parties, although he added that Tehran would likely try to use talks to address other issues besides its nuclear program.

Bilateral Issues -----

¶6. (C) Khatib thanked A/S Welch for the positive U.S. response to the establishment of a U.S.-Jordan Strategic Policy Group, and proposed holding its first meeting in late July. Emphasizing the GOJ's tough budgetary situation, he inquired about efforts in the U.S. Congress to grant supplemental aid to Jordan, and asked that the U.S. continue to try and influence wealthy Gulf states to provide Jordan with financial support.

¶7. (U) A/S Welch has cleared on this cable.

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